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**WILL THE BOLSHEVIKS  
RETAIN  
STATE POWER?**

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**By V · I · LENIN**



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# **WILL THE BOLSHEVIKS RETAIN STATE POWER?**

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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

LENIN was consciously and deliberately preparing the Bolshevik Party for the overthrow of the Kerensky régime and the transfer of power to the Soviets, which were rapidly changing their composition and becoming Bolshevik Soviets. His letter to the leading committees of the Bolshevik Party written September 25-27th and reprinted at the beginning of this booklet, places the question of the uprising definitely on the order of the day. The process of *proving* to the workers, of *convincing* them of the correctness of the Bolshevik analysis of the situation and the proposed program of action—a procedure which Lenin advised at the outset—was being completed with the aid of the events which transpired from March to September. The masses were showing their grasp of the situation by deserting the petty-bourgeois parties (Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, etc.), by acclaiming the Bolshevik slogans, by voting for Bolsheviks to the Soviets in larger and larger numbers.

Realising the certainty with which the Bolsheviks were marching toward the decisive struggle for power, the various petty-bourgeois parties, and particularly the group which claimed to stand in close proximity to the Bolsheviks (the group represented by the *Novaya Zhizn*, published by Gorky) were warning the Bolsheviks against "endangering the revolution." Two main questions were raised by them which had to be disposed of: Will the Bolsheviks dare to attempt to take power, and if they do and succeed in taking power, will they be able to hold it? These questions were completely answered in the essay "Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"

Lenin goes hammer and tongs after those whom he derisively called "quarter Bolsheviks," smashing their arguments one after another. The workers are isolated from the rest of the population, the new power could not withstand the opposition which will be marshalled against them—were the chief obstacles which the Bolsheviks could not overcome, according to the leaders of the *Novaya Zhizn* group, whom Lenin designated as "lawyers of the bourgeoisie." Fact by fact, argument by argument, Lenin builds up his case against the "quarter Bolsheviks" and all those faint of heart and blurred of vision. The demands for land for the peasants, freedom for the subject nationalities and the universal urge for peace, made the struggle of the workers and poor peasants a common one. The experience of putting down the Kornilov counter-revolution was a dress rehearsal and augured well for the ability of the masses to deal with any counter-revolution which might raise its head, and later history proved this contention to the hilt.

ALEXANDER TRACHTENBERG.

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## THE BOLSHEVIKS MUST ASSUME POWER

LETTER TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, THE PETROGRAD AND MOSCOW  
COMMITTEES OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

HAVING obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of both capitals, the Bolsheviks can and must take power into their hands.

They can do so because the active majority of the revolutionary elements of the people of both capitals is sufficient to attract the masses, to overcome the resistance of the adversary, to vanquish him, to conquer power and to retain it. For, in offering immediately a democratic peace, in giving the land immediately to the peasants, in re-establishing the democratic institutions and liberties which have been mangled and crushed by Kerensky, the Bolsheviks will form a government which *nobody* will overthrow.

The majority of the people is *with* us. This has been proven by the long and difficult road from May 19 to August 12 and September 25: the majority in the Soviets of the capitals is the *result* of the people's progress *to our side*. The vacillation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and the strengthening of internationalists among them, is proof of the same thing.

The Democratic Conference\* does *not* represent the majority of the revolutionary people, but *only the conciliatory petty-bourgeois top layer*. One must not let himself be deceived by the election figures; elections are not everything: compare the elections to the city councils of Petrograd and Moscow with the elections to the Soviets. Compare the elections in Moscow with the strike of August 25. Here we have objective data as regards the majority of the revolutionary elements that lead the masses.

The Democratic Conference deceives the peasantry without giving it either peace or land.

The Bolshevik government *alone* will satisfy the peasantry.

\* Called by the Kerensky government for September 27 in the attempt to secure a broader base among the petty bourgeoisie following the Kornilov revolt.—*Ed.*



Why must the Bolsheviks assume power right *now*?

Because the impending surrender of Petrograd will make our chances a hundred times worse.

But to prevent the surrender of Petrograd while the army is headed by Kerensky and Co. is not in our power.

To "wait" for the Constituent Assembly would be wrong. By surrendering Petrograd, Kerensky and Co. can always *destroy* the Constituent Assembly. Only our party, having assumed power, can secure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly; and, after assuming power, it could blame the other parties for delaying it and could substantiate its accusations.

A separate peace between the English and German imperialists must and can be prevented, but only by quick action.

The people are tired of the vacillations of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s. Only our victory in the capitals will draw the peasants after us.

What we are concerned with is not the "day" of the uprising, not the "moment" of the uprising in the narrow sense of the word. This will be decided by the common voice of those who are in contact with the workers and soldiers, with the *masses*.

What matters is that now, at the Democratic Conference, our party has practically *its own congress*, and this congress must (whether it wishes to do so or not) decide the *fate of the revolution*.

What matters is that we must make the *task* clear to the party, place on the order of the day the *armed uprising* in Petrograd and Moscow (including their regions), the conquest of power, the overthrow of the government. We must think of *how* to make propaganda in favour of this without committing ourselves in the press.

We must recall and ponder the words of Marx on uprising: "*Uprising is an art*," etc.

It would be naive to wait for a "formal" majority on the side of the Bolsheviks; no revolution ever waits for *this*. Kerensky and Co. are not waiting either, but are preparing the surrender of Petrograd. It is just the miserable vacillations of the Democratic Conference that must and will cause the patience of the workers of Petrograd and Moscow to end in a violent outburst! History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now.

No apparatus? There is an apparatus: the Soviets and democratic

organisations. The international situation *just now*, on the *eve* of a separate peace between the English and the Germans, is *in our favour*. It is precisely now that to offer peace to the peoples means to *win*.

Assume power at once in Moscow and in Petrograd (it does not matter which begins; perhaps even Moscow may begin); we will win *absolutely and unquestionably*.

N. LENIN.

Written September 25-27, 1917.

First published in the magazine *Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya*, No. 2, 1921.



## WILL THE BOLSHEVIKS RETAIN STATE POWER?

WHAT is it upon which all political tendencies are agreed, from the *Ryech* to the *Novaya Zhizn* inclusive, from the Cadet-Kornilovists \* to the semi-Bolsheviks, *all* except the Bolsheviks?

It is the conviction that either the Bolsheviks alone will never decide to take all state power into their hands or, if they do decide and take it, they will be incapable of retaining it for any length of time.

Lest any one say that the question of the assumption of all state power by the Bolsheviks alone is a question of no political reality whatsoever, that only the gross conceit of some "fanatic" can consider it to have reality, we shall forestall such an assertion by quoting the exact declarations of the most responsible and influential political parties and tendencies of various "hues."

But first a word or two regarding the first question: will the Bolsheviks decide to take all state power into their own hands alone? I have already had occasion to reply to this question with a categorical affirmative at the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in a remark I managed to shout from my seat during one of Tsereteli's ministerial speeches. And I have met no declaration by the Bolsheviks, either in the press or verbal, that we must not assume power alone. I still maintain the view that a political party in general, and the party of the advanced class in particular, would have no right to existence, would be unworthy of being considered a party, would be a pitiable cipher in every sense, were it to refuse power once there is a possibility of obtaining it.

Let us now quote the assertions of the Cadets, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the semi-Bolsheviks (I would rather say quarter-Bolsheviks) on the question under discussion.

Editorial in the *Ryech*, September 29:

Discord and confusion reigned in the hall of the Alexandrinsky Theatre and the Socialist press reflects the same picture. Only the views of the Bol-

\* Cadet—abbreviated name of the bourgeois Constitutional-Democratic Party; Kornilovists—inspirers and supporters of the counter-revolution led by General Kornilov.—*Ed.*



sheviks are characterised by their definiteness and directness. At the conference, these are the views of the minority. In the Soviets, this is an ever increasing trend. But in spite of all their fulmination, their bragging, their demonstration of self-confidence, the Bolsheviks, with the exception of a few fanatics, are brave only in words. They would not attempt to take "all power" of their own accord. Disorganisers and disrupters *par excellence*, they are actually cowards; in their heart of hearts they understand quite well both their personal ignorance and the ephemeral nature of their present successes. They know, just as well as we all do, that the first day of their final triumph would also be the first day of their headlong fall. Irresponsible in their very nature, anarchists in method and practice, they are conceivable only as one of the lines of political thought, or, more correctly, as one of its aberrations. The best means of getting rid of Bolshevism for many years to come, or of destroying it, would be to entrust its leaders with the fate of the country. And were it not for the consciousness of the inadmissible and disastrous nature of such experiments, one might, in despair, decide even on such an heroic step. Happily, we repeat, these dismal heroes of the day do not themselves really aim at the seizure of complete power. Under no conditions can constructive work be accessible to them. Thus all their definiteness and directness are limited to the sphere of the political platform, to verbal efforts at meetings. For practical purposes, their position cannot be taken into account from any point of view. However, in one respect it has a certain practical result: it unites all other shades of "Socialist thought" in a negative attitude towards it. . . .

This is how the Cadets argue. And here is the point of view of the largest "ruling and governing" party in Russia, the "Socialist-Revolutionaries," also in an unsigned, and therefore editorial, article of their official organ, *Dyelo Naroda*, October 4:

Should the bourgeoisie be unwilling to work together with the democracy on the basis of the platform laid down by the conference, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, then *the coalition must arise from within the conference itself*. This is a great sacrifice on the part of the defenders of the coalition, *but even the propagandists of the idea of a "clear line" of power must agree to this*. We are afraid, however, that no agreement may be reached, either. Then there remains a third and last combination. That section of the conference which *on principle* defended the idea of homogeneity of power, has the *duty* to organise a government.

Let us say it definitely: *the Bolsheviks will be obliged to form a cabinet*. With the greatest energy they have been inculcating revolutionary democracy with hatred of the coalition, promising it every blessing once "conciliationism" is abandoned, and blaming on the latter all the misfortunes of the country.

If they have really understood what they were doing with their *agitation*, if they have *not been deceiving the masses*, they are in *duty bound* to pay the promissory notes they handed out right and left.

The question is clear.

Let them not make any useless efforts to hide behind hastily concocted theories of the impossibility of their taking power.

Democracy will accept no such theories.

At the same time, the advocates of coalition must guarantee them full support. These are the three combinations, the three ways that are open to us—there are no others. [The italics are the *Dyelo Naroda's*.]



Thus the S.-R.'s. Here is finally the "position"—if the attempt to sit between two stools can be called a position—of the *Novaya Zhizn*-ist quarter-Bolsheviks, taken from the leading article in the *Novaya Zhizn*, October 6:

If the coalition with Konovalov and Kishkin is again formed, then it will mean nothing but a new capitulation of democracy and the rejection of the resolution of the conference regarding a responsible government on the basis of the platform of August 27. . . . \*

A homogeneous cabinet of Mensheviks and S.-R.'s will be as little able to feel its responsibility as did the responsible Socialist Ministers in the coalition cabinet. . . . Such a government would not only be incapable of rallying around itself the "live forces" of the revolution, but it could not even count on any active support from the vanguard of the proletariat.

Still, the formation of another type of homogeneous cabinet, a government of the "proletariat and the poorest peasantry," would be, not a better, but a much worse way out of the situation—in fact, not a way out at all, but simply a catastrophe. Such a slogan, it is true, is not advanced by any one except in occasional, timid, and subsequently systematically "explained" remarks of the *Rabochy Put*. [This glaring untruth is written "bravely" by responsible publicists, forgetting even the editorial of the *Dyelo Naroda* of October 4.]

The Bolsheviks have now formally revived the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets." This slogan was dropped when, after the July days, the Soviets, through the Central Executive Committee, definitely began to pursue an active anti-Bolshevik policy. Now, however, the "Soviet line" may not only be considered to have become straightened out, but there is every reason to assume that the proposed Congress of Soviets will yield a Bolshevik majority. Under such conditions the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," revived by the Bolsheviks, is a "tactical line" directed towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and the "poorest peasantry." True, by Soviets are also meant the Soviets of Peasant Deputies, and thus the Bolshevik slogan presupposes a power resting on the overwhelming majority of the whole democracy of Russia. But in this case the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," loses all its special meaning, since the Soviets are thus made almost identical in their composition with the "pre-parliament" \*\* formed by the conference. . . .

This statement of the *Novaya Zhizn* is a most shameless lie, and amounts to declaring that a falsified, a counterfeit democracy is "almost identical" with democracy. The pre-parliament is only a falsification, presenting the will of the minority of the people—particularly that of Kuskova, Berkenheim, Tchaikovsky and Co.—as if it were the will of the majority. That, in the first place. Secondly, even the peasant Soviets, faked by the Avksentyevs and Tchaikovskys, yielded such a high percentage of opponents to the coalition in the conference that together with the Soviets of Workers'

\* The platform of "revolutionary democracy," enunciated at the State Conference in Moscow by Menshevik leaders.—*Ed.*

\*\* Provisional Council of the Russian Republic decided upon by the Democratic Conference to serve as a representative body till the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.—*Ed.*



and Soldiers' Deputies there would have been an *absolute collapse of the coalition*. And thirdly, "Power to the Soviets" means that the power of the peasant Soviets would largely spread over the villages, and in these a majority of the *poorest* peasantry is assured.

If it is one and the same thing, then the Bolshevik slogan must be removed from the political arena without delay. If, however, "Power to the Soviets" only conceals dictatorship of the proletariat, then such a power would but signify the collapse and wreck of the revolution.

Is it necessary to prove that the proletariat, isolated not only from the other classes of the country but from the really living forces of the democracy, will not be able either technically to get hold of the state apparatus and to set it in motion under the exceptionally complicated circumstances, or politically to resist all the pressure of hostile forces, which will sweep away not only the dictatorship of the proletariat but the whole revolution as well?

The only power answering the requirements of the moment is a really honest coalition within the democracy.

We apologise to the reader for the long quotations, but they were absolutely necessary. It was necessary to present an exact view of the position of the various parties hostile to the Bolsheviks. It was necessary to definitely reveal the highly important circumstance that *all* these parties have admitted the question of the seizure of complete state power by the Bolsheviks alone to be not only a question of political reality, but also a very urgent question of the day.

Let us now pass to an analysis of the reasons on the strength of which "all," from the Cadets to the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists, are convinced that the Bolsheviks cannot retain power.

The sedate *Ryech* presents no arguments at all. It merely pours out on the Bolsheviks streams of the choicest and most irate abuse. The quotation cited by us shows, among other things, how very wrong it would be to think that the *Ryech* is cunningly "provoking" the Bolsheviks into seizing power and that therefore: "Be careful, comrades, since what the enemy advises must certainly be dangerous!" If, instead of realistically taking into account considerations of both a general and particular nature, we allow ourselves to be "persuaded" by the circumstance that the bourgeoisie is "provoking" us to take power, we shall find that we have been fooled by the bourgeoisie. For, undoubtedly, the bourgeoisie will always prophesy in its fury a million misfortunes to follow the assumption of power by the Bolsheviks; it will always cry in a fury: "Better get rid of the Bolsheviks all at once for 'a long period of years' by letting them attain power and then striking them a mortal blow." Such cries are also "provocation" if you like, only from the opposite



side. The Cadets and the bourgeoisie do not "advise" and have never "advised" us to seize power; they only wish to *frighten* us by what they call insoluble problems of power.

No, we must not allow ourselves to be frightened by the shouts of the scared bourgeoisie. We must remember that we have never placed before ourselves "insoluble" social problems; as to the perfectly soluble problems of taking immediate steps towards Socialism as the only way out of an extremely difficult situation, *they will only be solved* by the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry. Victory, and lasting victory, is now more than ever, more than anywhere, assured to the proletariat in Russia if it seizes power.

Let us discuss in purely business fashion the *concrete* circumstances which render unfavourable this or that particular moment, but let us not allow ourselves to be frightened for a minute by the wild screams of the bourgeoisie, and let us not forget that the question of the seizure of all power by the Bolsheviks is becoming a really *urgent question of the day*. An immeasurably greater danger is threatening our party if we forget this, than if we concede that the seizure of power is "premature." Nothing can be "premature" in this respect at present; of a million chances all except perhaps one or two are in favour of this.

As to the infuriated abuse of the *Ryech*, we can and must repeat:

We hear the voice of approbation  
Not in the dulcet sounds of praise,  
But in the roar of irritation! \*

The fact that the bourgeoisie hates us so madly is one of the most convincing proofs of the truth that we are *correctly* indicating to the people the ways and means for the overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The *Dyelo Naroda*, this time as a rare exception, did not think fit to honour us with its abuse, but it has not advanced even a shadow of proof, either. Only in an indirect way, in the form of a hint, it seeks to *frighten* us by the prospect, "the Bolsheviks will be obliged to form a cabinet." We admit fully that in trying to scare us the S.-R.'s are themselves most sincerely scared—scared to death by the phantom of the terrorised liberals. Similarly I admit that in some especially lofty and especially rotten institutions like the

\* From the poem of Nekrasov on the death of Gogol.—Ed.



Central Executive Committee and such-like "contact" commissions (for keeping in touch with the Cadets, or, more bluntly, for keeping company with the Cadets), the S.-R.'s may be successful in frightening some of the Bolsheviks; for, in the first place, the atmosphere in all these Central Executive Committees, in the pre-parliament, and so forth, is abominable, poisonous and debilitating, and to breathe it for any length of time is bad for *any one*; and secondly, sincerity is contagious, and a sincerely scared philistine is capable of temporarily transforming even a revolutionist into a philistine.

But no matter how easy it may be, from the "human" point of view, to understand the sincere fright of the S.-R. who has had the misfortune to be a Minister with the Cadets, or in a ministerial position before the Cadets, yet to allow oneself to be frightened means to commit a political error which may easily prove to be bordering on betrayal of the proletariat. What are your business-like arguments, gentlemen? You need not hope that we will allow ourselves to be scared by your fright!

Arguments to the point are to be found this time only in the *Novaya Zhizn*. This time it comes out as an advocate of the bourgeoisie, which role suits it much better than the role of defender of the Bolsheviks, which is obviously "shocking" to this exceedingly lovely damsel.

Six arguments were advanced by this advocate:

1. The proletariat is "isolated from the other classes of the country."
2. It is "isolated from the really vital forces of the democracy."
3. It "will not be able technically to get hold of the state apparatus."
4. It "will not be able to set this apparatus in motion."
5. The "circumstances are exceptionally complicated."
6. It "will not be able to resist all the pressure of the hostile forces which will sweep away not only the dictatorship of the proletariat but the whole revolution as well."

The first argument is stated by the *Novaya Zhizn* so clumsily as to be positively ridiculous, for we know but three classes in capitalist and semi-capitalist society: the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie (with the peasantry as its chief representative), and the proletariat. What sense is there, then, in talking about the proletariat being



isolated from the other classes, when we talk about the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, a revolution against the bourgeoisie?

The *Novaya Zhizn* must have meant that the proletariat is isolated from the peasantry, for surely there could be no question here of the landowners. But it dared not say directly and clearly that the proletariat is now isolated from the peasantry, for the glaring untruth of such a statement is too strikingly self-evident.

It is difficult to imagine that in a capitalist country the proletariat should be so little isolated from the petty bourgeoisie—and this, do not forget, in a revolution *against the bourgeoisie*—as is the proletariat now in Russia. We have objective and undisputed data concerning the voting *for* and *against* a coalition with the bourgeoisie; these are the most recent data about the “curia” of Tsere-teli’s “Bulygin Duma,” \* *i.e.*, the notorious “Democratic” Conference.

Taking the Soviet curia, we find:

	<i>For Coalition</i>	<i>Against Coalition</i>
Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies .....	83	192
Soviets of Peasants’ Deputies...	102	70
	—	—
All Soviets .....	185	262

Thus the majority as a whole is on the side of the proletarian slogan: *against* a coalition with the bourgeoisie. And we have seen above that even the Cadets are forced to admit the growing influence of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets. Still, what we have here is a conference summoned by the Soviet leaders of *yesterday*, by the S.-R.’s and Mensheviks who have an assured majority in the central institutions. It is clear that the *actual* predominance of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets is here *not sufficiently expressed*.

Both on the question of a coalition with the bourgeoisie and on the immediate transfer of the landowners’ land to the peasant committees, the Bolsheviks already have a *majority* in the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies—a *majority of the people*, a majority of the petty bourgeoisie. The *Rabochy Put*, No. 19, October 7, cites from No. 25 of the S.-R. organ, *Znamya Truda*, an

\* The Democratic Conference is likened to the Duma proposed by Minister Bulygin in 1905 which was given only consultative powers and excluded workers from the elections.—*Ed.*



account of a conference of local Soviets of Peasant Deputies held in Petrograd on October 1. At this conference, the Executive Committees of four peasant Soviets (Kostroma, Moscow, Samara and Tauric provinces) expressed themselves in favour of unlimited coalition. For a coalition without the Cadets there were the Executive Committees of *three* provinces and *two* armies (Vladimir, Ryazan and the Black Sea provinces). Against coalition there were the Executive Committees of *twenty-three* provinces and *four* armies

*Thus, the majority of the peasantry is against the coalition!*

Here is your "isolation of the proletariat."

We must note, by the way, that *for* coalition there were three border provinces, Samara, Tauric and Black Sea, where there are a comparatively large number of rich peasants, big landowners, working their land with hired labour, and also four industrial provinces (Vladimir, Ryazan, Kostroma and Moscow) where also the peasant bourgeoisie is stronger than in the majority of the Russian provinces. It would be interesting to gather more detailed data on this subject and to ascertain whether any information is available regarding the *poorest* peasants in the provinces containing the "*richest*" peasantry.

Further, it is interesting to note that the "national groups" yielded a considerable majority to the opponents of a coalition, namely, 40 votes against 15. The annexationist, harshly oppressive policy of the Bonapartist Kerensky and Co. towards the non-sovereign nations of Russia has borne fruit. The broad masses of the population of the oppressed nations, *i.e.*, the masses of the petty bourgeoisie among them—trust the Russian proletariat more than they do the bourgeoisie, for history has here brought to the foreground the struggle for freedom of the oppressed nations against their oppressors. The bourgeoisie has betrayed the cause of freedom of the oppressed nations in a dastardly way; the proletariat is true to the cause of freedom.

The national and agrarian questions—these are fundamental questions for the petty-bourgeois masses of the population of Russia at the present time. This is indisputable. With regard to both questions the proletariat is remarkably far from isolation. It has behind it the majority of the people. It *alone* is capable of pursuing such a decided, truly "revolutionary-democratic" policy on both questions as would assure immediately to a proletarian state power not only the support of the majority of the population, but a veritable outburst of revolutionary enthusiasm among the masses; since



for the first time the masses would meet on the part of the government, not a merciless oppression of the peasantry by the landowners, of the Ukrainians by the Great Russians, as under tsarism; not attempts to follow the same policy under a republic, only camouflaged by high-sounding phrases; not caviling, insults, chicanery, dilatoriness, hauteur, evasions (with all of which Kerensky rewards the peasantry and the oppressed nations); but warm sympathy expressed in deeds: immediate and revolutionary measures against the landowners, immediate *complete* restitution of freedom to Finland, the Ukraine, White Russia, the Mohammedans, etc.

The S.-R. and Menshevik gentlemen know this very well, and this is why they drag the semi-Cadet leaders of the co-operatives to assist in their *reactionary-democratic* policy *against* the masses. This is why they will never dare to consult the masses, to institute a referendum or even a vote in all the local Soviets, in all local organisations, on definite points of practical policy, for instance, whether all the landowners' lands should be given over immediately to the peasant committees, whether such and such demands of the Finns and Ukrainians should be conceded, and so forth.

And the question of peace, that cardinal question of the whole of present-day life? The proletariat is "isolated from the other classes." . . . Truly, the proletariat here steps forth as the representative of the *whole* people, of all that is alive and honest in *all* classes, of the vast majority of the petty bourgeoisie; for only the proletariat, having attained power, will at once propose a just peace to all the belligerent nations; only the proletariat will undertake really *revolutionary* measures (publication of secret treaties, etc.) so as to obtain at the earliest moment as just a peace as possible.

No, the gentlemen of the *Novaya Zhizn*, howling about the isolation of the proletariat, only express thereby their own subjective terror induced by the bourgeoisie. The objective state of affairs in Russia is undoubtedly such that *just at the present time* the proletariat is *not* "isolated" from the majority of the petty bourgeoisie. Just now, after the sad experience of the "coalition," the proletariat has on its side the sympathy of the *majority* of the people. *This* condition for the retention of power by the Bolsheviks *is* there.

The second argument consists in the assertion that the proletariat is "isolated from the really vital forces of the democracy." What



this means it is impossible to understand. It is probably "Greek," as the French say in such cases.

The writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* are ministerial people. They would be fit to serve as Ministers under the Cadets. For what is required of such Ministers is the ability to utter fine-sounding sleek phrases in which there is no sense whatever, which can cover up every rottenness, and which are therefore assured of the applause of the imperialists and the social-imperialists. The applause of the Cadets, of Breshkovskaya, of Plekhanov and Co. is guaranteed the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists by their statement that the proletariat is isolated from the really vital forces of the democracy; for in an *indirect* way it means—or it will be understood as though it meant—that the Cadets, Breshkovskaya, Plekhanov, Kerensky and Co. are "the vital forces of the democracy."

This is untrue. These are dead forces. This has been proved by the history of the coalition.

Cowed by the bourgeoisie and bourgeois-intellectual environment, the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists recognise as "vital" the Right Wing of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks, such as the *Volya Naroda*, *Yedinstvo*, etc., which differ in nothing vital from the Cadets. We, on the other hand, recognise as "vital" only what is bound up with the masses, not with the kulaks, only that which has been led by experience of the coalition to turn away from it. "The active vital forces" of the petty-bourgeois democracy are represented by the Left Wings of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks. The strengthening of this Left Wing, particularly after the July counter-revolution, is one of the most certain objective signs that the proletariat is *not* isolated.

This has become still more evident just lately by the wavering of the S.-R. Centre towards the Left, as proved by Chernov's declaration of October 7, to the effect that this group cannot support the new coalition with Kishkin and Co. This wavering towards the Left of the S.-R. Centre, which until now has formed an overwhelming majority of the representatives of the S.-R. Party—the party which, as a result of the number of votes obtained by it in the towns and particularly in the villages, occupies a supreme and dominating position—proves that the statement quoted by us from the *Dyelo Naroda* regarding the necessity for the democracy, under certain circumstances, to "guarantee full support" to a purely Bolshevik government, is, at any rate, not a mere phrase.

Such facts as the refusal of the S.-R. Centre to support a



coalition with Kishkin, and the predominance of the *opponents* of coalition among the *Menshevik defensists* in the provinces (Jordania in the Caucasus, etc.), are objective proof that a certain section of the *masses*, who, until now, have followed the Mensheviks and S.-R.'s, *will support* a purely Bolshevik government.

It is just from the *vital* forces of the democracy that the Russian proletariat is not isolated at present.

The third argument: the proletariat "will not be able technically to get hold of the state apparatus." This, we grant, is the most usual, the most widespread argument. It deserves the greatest attention both for this reason and because it really points out one of the most *serious*, one of the most *difficult* tasks confronting the victorious proletariat. There is no doubt these tasks are very difficult, but if, while calling ourselves Socialists, we point out this difficulty for the sole purpose of *avoiding* the fulfilment of these tasks, then, in practice, there will be no difference between us and the servants of the bourgeoisie. The difficulties of the tasks of the proletarian revolution should only stimulate those siding with the proletariat to study more carefully, and more concretely, the methods of carrying out these tasks.

By the state apparatus is meant, first of all, the standing army, the police and officialdom. In speaking of the proletariat being unable technically to get hold of this apparatus, the writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* reveal the greatest ignorance and unwillingness to heed either the facts of life or the deductions made long ago in Bolshevik literature.

The writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* all consider themselves, if not Marxists, at any rate as being acquainted with Marxism and as educated Socialists. And Marx taught us, from the experience of the Paris Commune, that the proletariat *cannot* simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and set it in motion for its own purposes, that the proletariat must *destroy* this machinery and replace it by a new one. (This I treat in detail in a pamphlet, *The State and Revolution—the Teaching of Marxism about the State, and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*.\*) This new state apparatus was created by the Paris Commune, and of the same type of "state apparatus" are the Russian Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. I have pointed this out many times, begin-

\* Little Lenin Library, Vol. 14.—Ed.



ning April 17, 1917; this is mentioned in the resolutions of Bolshevik conferences and in Bolshevik literature. Of course, the *Novaya Zhizn* could have announced its complete disagreement both with Marx and with the Bolsheviks, but for a journal that has so often and so haughtily abused the Bolsheviks for their "frivolous" attitude towards difficult questions, to evade this subject altogether means to issue to themselves a certificate of poverty.

The proletariat *cannot* "lay hold" of the "state apparatus" and "set it in motion." But it can *destroy* all that is oppressive, that is merely routine and is incurably bourgeois in the old state apparatus, and put in its place *its own*, new apparatus. This apparatus is the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

One cannot but call it simply monstrous that the *Novaya Zhizn* has completely forgotten this "state apparatus." In conducting thus their theoretical discussions, the writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* are actually doing in the sphere of political theory exactly what the Cadets are doing in the sphere of political practice. For if the proletariat and revolutionary democracy really need *no* new state apparatus, then the Soviets lose their *raison d'être*; in that case the Cadet-Kornilovists are *right* in their efforts to reduce the Soviets to naught.

This monstrous theoretical error and political blindness of the *Novaya Zhizn* is so much the more monstrous in that even the Menshevik-Internationalists (with whom the *Novaya Zhizn* entered into a bloc at the last municipal elections in Petrograd) have revealed in this question a certain approach towards the Bolsheviks. Thus we read in the declaration of the Soviet majority read by Comrade Martov at the Democratic Conference:

... The Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies created in the first days by the mighty impulse of the truly creative genius of the people, have formed that new tissue of the revolutionary state which has replaced the decayed state tissue of the old regime. ...

This is expressed a trifle too prettily—*i. e.*, pretentiousness of language conceals here the insufficient clarity of political thought. The Soviets have *not yet* replaced the old "tissue," and this old tissue is *not* the state of the old regime, but the state of *both* tsarism *and* the bourgeois republic. Still, Martov here stands two heads above the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists.

The Soviets are the new state apparatus, which, in the first place, represents the armed force of the workers and peasants, a force that



is not divorced from the people, as was the force of the old standing army, but is bound up with them as closely as possible. In a military sense, this force is incomparably more mighty than the former; in relation to the revolution it is second to none. Secondly, this apparatus represents a connection with the masses, with the majority of the people, that is so intimate, so indissoluble, so readily verifiable and renewable, that nothing like it was even approached in the former state. Thirdly, this apparatus, because it is elective and its personnel is subject to recall in accordance with the will of the people without any bureaucratic formalities, is far more democratic than were the former ones. Fourthly, it represents a firm connection with the most diverse occupations, thus facilitating all sorts of most radical reforms without any bureaucracy. Fifthly, it represents a form of organisation of the vanguard, *i. e.*, of the most class-conscious, most energetic, most progressive section of the *oppressed* classes, of the workers and peasants, and is thus an apparatus whereby the vanguard of the oppressed classes can elevate, educate and lead in its train the *whole gigantic mass* of these classes which until now have stood absolutely outside all political life, outside history. Sixthly, it makes it possible to combine the advantages of parliamentarism with the advantages of immediate and direct democracy, *i. e.*, to unite in the persons of elected representatives of the people both legislative and *executive* functions. Compared with bourgeois parliamentarism, this is a step forward in the development of democracy which has an historical world significance.

Our Soviets of 1905 were only, so to speak, an embryo, for they existed for a few weeks only. It is quite clear that under the circumstances of the time there could be no question of their all-round development. In the 1917 Revolution, there can as yet be no question of it either, for a period of a few months is too little, and, above all, the S.-R. and Menshevik leaders of the Soviets have *prostituted* them, have degraded them to the role of talking shops, of accessories to the conciliationist policy of the leaders. The Soviets have been rotting and decaying under the leadership of the Libers, Dans, Tseretelis, and Chernovs. The Soviets can only develop properly and expand to the full their promise and capabilities when they assume *full* state power, for otherwise they have *nothing* to do; otherwise they are simply embryos (and an embryo



cannot endure too long) or mere playthings. Dual power means the paralysis of the Soviets.

Had not the popular creativeness of the revolutionary classes given rise to the Soviets, the proletarian revolution in Russia would have been hopeless, for there is no doubt that with the old state apparatus, the proletariat could not have retained power, while it is impossible to create a new apparatus all at once. The sad history of the prostitution of the Soviets by Tsereteli and Chernov, the history of the "coalition," is, at the same time, the history of freeing the Soviets from petty-bourgeois illusions, passing through the "purgatory" of a practical study of all the abominations and filth of *all and every* bourgeois coalition. Let us hope that this "purgatory" has not undermined the Soviets, but has tempered them.

The main difficulty in a proletarian revolution is the realisation on a national scale of a most exact and honest accounting and control, *workers' control* over production and distribution of goods.

When the writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* argued that in putting forward the slogan of "workers' control" we were falling into syndicalism, this argument was a specimen of a silly schoolboy application of "Marxism," which, instead of having been intelligently digested, has been only learned by rote after the manner of Struve. Syndicalism either rejects the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, or relegates it, like political power in general, to the last place. We give it first place. If one were to talk simply in the spirit of the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists—not workers' control but state control—one would have a bourgeois-reformist phrase, in fact a purely Cadet formula, for the Cadets have nothing against the *participation* of the workers in "state" control. The Cadet-Kornilovists know very well that such participation is the best way for the bourgeoisie to deceive the workers, the best method of subtly bribing in a political sense all kinds of Gvozdevs, Nikitins, Prokopoviches, Tseretelis, and all that crowd.

When we say "workers' control," placing this slogan *side by side* with the dictatorship of the proletariat, and always after it, we thus make clear what state we have in mind. The state is an organ of the rule of a class. Which class? If the bourgeoisie, then this is just the Cadet-Kornilov-Kerensky statehood under which the working people of Russia have been suffering for over half a year. If the proletariat, if we have in mind a proletarian state, *i. e.*, the dic-



tatorship of the proletariat, then workers' control *can* become a national, all-embracing, omnipresent, most exact and most conscientious *accounting* of production and distribution of goods.

Therein lies the main difficulty, therein is the main task of the proletarian, *i. e.*, the Socialist revolution. Without the Soviets this task, at any rate for Russia, would be impossible of achievement. The Soviets indicate the organisational work of the proletariat which *can* solve this problem of historical world significance.

Here we have approached another side of the question of state apparatus. Besides the preponderant "repressive" machinery, the standing army, the police, and the officialdom, there is in the modern state a machinery that is closely connected with banks and syndicates, fulfilling as it does a great mass of work of accounting and record-keeping, if one may so express it. This machinery cannot and must not be broken up. It must be forcibly freed from subjection to the capitalists; the latter must be cut off, broken, chopped away from it with the threads transmitting their influence; it must be *subjected* to the proletarian Soviets; it must be made wider, more all-embracing, more popular. And this *can* be done by relying on the achievements already attained by large-scale capital (as, indeed, the proletarian revolution in general can only attain its aim by taking these achievements as its basis).

Capitalism created the *apparatus* for accounting: the banks, syndicates, post office, consumers' societies, unions of employees. *Without the big banks Socialism could not be realised.*

The big banks are that "state apparatus" which we *need* for the realisation of Socialism and which we *take ready-made* from capitalism. Our problem here is only to *chop off* that which capitalistically disfigures this otherwise excellent apparatus and to make it even *larger*, more democratic, more all-embracing. Quantity will change into quality. One state bank as huge as possible, with branches in every *township*, in every factory—this is already nine-tenths of the *Socialist* apparatus. This is general state *accounting*, general state *accounting* of production and distribution of goods, this is, so to speak, something in the nature of the *skeleton* of Socialist society.

This "state apparatus" (which under capitalism is not wholly a state apparatus but which will be completely so with us under Socialism) we can "lay hold of" and "set in motion" at one stroke, by one decree, for the actual work of bookkeeping, control, regis-



tration, accounting and summation is here carried out by *employees*, most of whom are themselves in a proletarian or semi-proletarian position.

The proletarian government can and must, by one decree, transform all these employees into state employees—in the same way that the watch-dogs of capitalism, such as Briand and other bourgeois Ministers, transform striking railwaymen into state employees. We shall need a great many more of such state employees; and more of them *can* be obtained, for capitalism has simplified the functions of accounting and control, and has reduced them to such comparatively simple processes as to be within the reach of any literate person.

The “nationalisation” of the bank, syndicate, commercial and other such employees is perfectly realisable, both technically (thanks to the preliminary work accomplished for us by capitalism and finance capitalism) and politically, under the conditions of control and supervision by the *Soviets*.

As for the higher employees, of whom there are very few, but who incline towards the capitalists, we shall have to treat them like capitalists—“with severity.” They, like the capitalists, will *resist*, and this resistance will have to be *broken*. The immortally naive Peshekhonov lisped as early as June, 1917, like the real “state infant” \* that he is, that “the resistance of the capitalists has been broken”; but this childish phrase, this infantile swagger, this boyish sally, *will be turned by the proletariat into reality in all seriousness*.

This we can do, for here it is a question of breaking the resistance of an insignificant minority of the population, literally a handful of people, over every one of whom the employees’ unions, trade unions, consumers’ societies and the Soviets will institute such supervision that every Tit Titych \*\* will be *surrounded* like the French at Sedan. We know them all by name: it is enough to take the lists of directors, members of management boards, the big shareholders, and so on. There are a few hundred of them, at most a few thousand, in the whole of Russia, each of whom the proletarian state, with its Soviet apparatus, its employees’ unions, and so on, can surround with tens or hundreds of controllers, so that possibly, instead of “breaking the resistance,” we may succeed, by means of *workers’*

\* A derisive expression used by the famous satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin to designate a naive and ignorant high official.—*Ed.*

\*\* Name of a tyrannical merchant ridiculed in one of Ostrovsky’s comedies.—*Ed.*



control (over the capitalists), in making any such resistance *impossible*.

The vital matter will be not the confiscation of capitalist property, but universal, all-embracing workers' control over the capitalists and their possible supporters. By means of confiscation alone you can do nothing, for in that there is no element of organisation, of accounting, of correct distribution. We shall readily substitute for confiscation the levying of a *just tax* (even using Shingarev's rates), if only we can thereby exclude the possibility of any evasion of account rendering, concealing of the truth, evading the law. And *only workers' control in the workers' state will remove this possibility*.

*Forced syndication, i. e., forced uniting into associations under the control of the state, is what capitalism has prepared; this is what the Junker state has realised in Germany, this is what will be completely realisable in Russia for the Soviets, for the dictatorship of the proletariat; this is what the "state apparatus," universal, new and non-bureaucratic, will give us.\**

The fourth argument of the advocates of the bourgeoisie: the proletariat will be unable to "set in motion" the state apparatus. This argument, in comparison with the preceding one, presents nothing new. The old apparatus we could neither seize nor set in motion. The new apparatus, the Soviets, has already been set in motion by the "mighty impulse of the real national creative genius." This apparatus must only be freed of the shackles put on it by the domination of the S.-R. and Menshevik leaders. This apparatus is *already* in motion, it is only necessary to rid it of the disfiguring petty-bourgeois appendages which are hindering it from going forward and forward in full swing.

To complete what was said above, two circumstances must be examined: first, the new methods of control that have been created, not by us, but by capitalism in its military-imperialist stage; second, the significance of the deepening of democracy in the work of *administering* a state of the proletarian type.

The grain monopoly and bread cards have been created, not by us, but by the belligerent capitalist state. It has already created universal labour service within the framework of capitalism—that is,

\* For more details about the meaning of forced syndication see my pamphlet, *The Threatening Catastrophe and How to Fight It*. [Little Lenin Library, Vol. 11.—Ed.]



a military hard labour prison for the workers. But here too the proletariat, as in all its historical creative work, takes its implements from capitalism; it does not "think them up," or "create them from nothing."

The grain monopoly, the bread cards, universal labour service become, in the hands of the proletarian state, in the hands of the all-powerful Soviets, the most powerful means for accounting and control, a means which, extended to the capitalists and *the rich in general*, being applied to them by the *workers*, will give a power unheard-of in history for "setting in motion" the state apparatus, for overcoming the resistance of the capitalists, for subjecting them to the proletarian state. This means of control and *compulsory labour* is stronger than the laws of the Convention and its guillotine. The guillotine only frightened, only crushed *active* resistance. *For us this is not enough.*

For us this is not enough. We must not only "frighten" the capitalists so that they feel the all-pervading strength of the proletarian state and forget to think of active resistance to it. We must crush also their *passive* resistance, which is undoubtedly still more dangerous and harmful. We must not only crush every kind of resistance. We must *make people work* within the framework of the new state organisation. It is not enough to "get rid of" the capitalists, it is necessary (after having removed the incapable ones, the incorrigible "resisters") to put them to *new state service*. This applies to the capitalists as well as to a certain upper stratum of the bourgeois intellectuals, clerks, etc.

And we have the means to do so. The belligerent capitalist state has itself given us the means and weapons to carry this out. This means is the grain monopoly, the bread cards, universal labour service. "He who works not, neither shall he eat"—this is the basic, primary and chief rule which the Soviets of Workers' Deputies can and will introduce as soon as they become the governing power.

Every worker has a work book. This document does not humiliate him, although *at the present time* it undoubtedly is a document of capitalist wage slavery, testifying to the subjection of the working man to this or that parasite.

The Soviets will institute the work book *for the rich*, and *then* gradually for the whole population (in a peasant country, a work book will probably be unnecessary for a very long time for the overwhelming majority of the peasants). The work book will cease



to be a sign of belonging to the "rabble," will cease to be a document of the "lower" orders, a certificate of wage slavery. It will be converted into a document testifying that in the new society there are no longer any "labourers," but that, on the other hand, there is no one who is not a *worker*.

The rich must receive a work book from that union of factory or office workers which is most nearly related to their sphere of activity; they must receive weekly, or at other regular periods, a certificate from this union that they are doing their work conscientiously; without this they will not get their bread card or food products in general. We need good organisers in banking, and in the work of combining enterprises (in these matters the capitalists have more experience, and work is done more easily with experienced people); we need more and more engineers, agronomists, technicians, scientific experts of every kind. We shall give all such workers work which they are able and are accustomed to do; probably, we shall only gradually bring in equality for all work, leaving a temporary higher rate of pay for such specialists during the transition period, but we shall put them under an all-embracing workers' control; we shall attain the full and unconditional application of the rule: "He who works not, neither shall he eat." As for the organisational form of the work, we do not invent it, we take it ready-made from capitalism: banks, syndicates, the best factories, experimental stations, academies, etc.; we need adopt only the best models furnished by the experience of the most advanced countries.

And of course we are not losing ourselves in a Utopia, we are not ceasing to look at things in a sober, practical way, when we say that the whole capitalist class will offer the most stubborn resistance, but that by the organisation of the whole population in Soviets, this resistance will be broken. The extraordinarily obstinate and non-submissive capitalists will, of course, have to be punished by the confiscation of the whole of their wealth and by imprisonment; on the other hand, the victory of the proletariat will increase the number of such cases as those of which, for instance, I read in today's *Izvestiya*:

On October 9, two engineers appeared before the Central Council of Factory and Shop Committees with the declaration that an engineering group had decided to form a union of Socialist engineers. Recognising that the present time is the beginning of social revolution, the union places itself at the disposal of the working masses, and in the interests of the workers it wishes



to act in complete accord with the workers' organisations. The representatives of the Central Council of Factory and Shop Committees replied that the Council would gladly form within its organisation an engineering section including in its programme the fundamental theses of the first conference of Factory and Shop Committees regarding workers' control over production. In the near future there will be a joint session of the delegates of the Central Council of Factory and Shop Committees and the provisional group of Socialist engineers (*Izvestiya*, October 10, 1917).

The proletariat, we are told, will be unable to set the state apparatus in motion.

After the 1905 Revolution, Russia was ruled by 130,000 landowners. They ruled by means of constant force over 150,000,000 people, by pouring unlimited scorn on them, by subjecting the vast majority to hard labour and semi-starvation.

And yet we are told that Russia will not be able to be governed by the 240,000 members of the Bolshevik Party—governing in the interests of the poor and against the rich. These 240,000 already have no less than a million votes of the adult population back of them, for just this proportion between the number of votes cast for a party and the number of its members has been established by the experience of Europe and also of Russia, as, for instance, in the August municipal elections in Petrograd. So here we have already a "state apparatus" of *one million* persons faithful to the ideal of the Socialist state, and not working merely for the sake of getting a fat roll every 20th of the month.

Moreover, we have a "magic means" for increasing *tenfold* our state apparatus with one stroke, a means which never has been and never could be at the disposal of a capitalist state. This magic thing is the drawing of the workers, the poor people, into the everyday work of managing the state.

To explain how simple is the application of this magic means, how faultless is its action, we shall take a most simple and obvious example.

The state has forcibly to evict a family from a house and to install another in it. This is done time and again by the capitalist state, and it will also have to be done by ours, by the proletarian or Socialist state.

The capitalist state evicts a workers' family which has lost its breadwinner and does not pay rent. There comes upon the scene a bailiff, policeman, or militiaman, with a whole platoon of men. In a working-class district a whole detachment of Cossacks is necessary for the eviction. Why? Because the bailiff and policeman



refuse to go without military protection of considerable strength. They know that the sight of an eviction brings forth such mad fury among the neighbouring population, among thousands and thousands driven well-nigh to despair, such hatred against the capitalists and the capitalist state, that the bailiff and the squad of police might at any moment be torn to pieces. Large military forces are necessary; several regiments of soldiers must be brought into the town from a province, necessarily distant, so that the soldiers may know nothing of the life of the town poor, so that the soldiers may not be "infected" with Socialism.

The proletarian state has forcibly to move a very needy family into the dwelling of a rich man. Our detachment of workers' militia consists, let us say, of fifteen people—two sailors, two soldiers, two class-conscious workers (of which only one needs to be a member of our party or sympathising with it), one intellectual, and eight poor labourers, of whom there would be at least five women, servants, unskilled workmen, and so on. The detachment comes to the rich man's house, investigates, and finds five rooms for two men and two women. "For this winter, citizens, you must confine yourselves to two rooms and prepare two rooms for two families that are now living in cellars. For a time, until with the help of engineers (you are an engineer, I think?) we build good houses for all, you will have to put yourselves out a bit. Your telephone will serve ten families. This will save about a hundred hours' work in running to the stores, and so on. Then in your family there are two unoccupied semi-workers capable of doing light work—a woman of fifty-five and a boy of fourteen. They will be on duty for three hours daily, superintending the distribution of products for the ten families, and they will keep the necessary accounts. The student in our detachment will write out two copies of the text of this state order and you will kindly give us a signed declaration of your undertaking to carry out the duties accurately."

Thus, in my view, could be demonstrated in very clear examples the difference between the old bourgeois and the new Socialist state apparatus and state administration.

We are not Utopians. We know that just any labourer or any cook would be incapable of taking over immediately the administration of the state. In this we agree with the Cadets, with Breshkovskaya, and with Tsereteli. But we differ from these citizens in that we demand an immediate break away from the prejudice that



assumes that the *administration* of the state, the performance of the ordinary, everyday work of management, can only be done by the rich or by officials picked from rich families. We demand that the *teaching* of the business of state administration should be conducted by the class-conscious workers and soldiers, that this should be started immediately, *i. e.*, that steps should be taken *immediately* to start giving such instruction to all the labouring masses, all the poor.

We know that the Cadets also agree that democracy should be taught to the people. Cadet ladies are willing to give lectures to servants on women's rights, in accordance with the best French and English authorities. Also, at the very next concert-meeting, before an audience of thousands of people, there will be arranged on the platform a general kissing: a Cadet lady lecturer will kiss Breshkovskaya, the latter will kiss the ex-Minister Tsereteli, and a grateful people will thus learn the meaning of republican equality, liberty and fraternity. . . .

Yes, we quite agree that the Cadets, Breshkovskaya and Tsereteli are in their own way devoted to democracy, and propagate it among the people; but what is to be done if we have an idea of democracy somewhat different from theirs?

According to us, in order to mitigate the unheard-of burdens and miseries of the war, and at the same time to heal the terrible wounds inflicted on the people by the war, *revolutionary* democracy is necessary, *revolutionary* measures are needed, of the kind described in the example of the redistribution of dwellings in the interests of the poor. *Exactly in the same way* must we deal both in town and country with foodstuffs, clothes, boots, and so on, and in the country with the landowners' land, etc. For the administration of the state *in this spirit* we can *bring into action immediately a state apparatus* of about ten if not twenty millions—an apparatus unknown in any capitalist country. This apparatus only *we* can create, for we are assured of the full and unlimited sympathy of the vast majority of the population. This apparatus only *we* can create, because we have class-conscious workers, disciplined by a long "apprenticeship" to capitalism (not for naught did we serve this apprenticeship to capitalism), workers who are *capable* of forming a workers' militia and *gradually* of enlarging it (commencing this enlargement immediately) into a *universal* militia. The class-conscious workers must lead, but they can attract to the



actual work of administration the real labouring and oppressed masses.

Of course, mistakes are inevitable during the first steps taken by this new apparatus. But did the peasants make no mistakes when, emerging from serfdom and becoming free, they began to manage their own affairs? Can there be any other method of teaching the people to manage their own affairs and to avoid mistakes than that of actual practice, than the immediate starting of real popular self-government? The most important thing at the present time is to get rid of the prejudice of the bourgeois intellectuals that only special officials, entirely dependent on capital by their whole social position, can carry on the administration of the state. The most important thing is to put an end to that state of affairs in which the bourgeois, the petty officials and "Socialist" Ministers try to manage the state as of old, but cannot manage, and, after seven months, are faced with a peasant rising in a peasant country!! The most important thing is to instil in the oppressed and labouring masses confidence in their own power, to show them by actual practice that they can and must themselves undertake correct, most strict, orderly, organised distribution of bread, of every kind of food, milk, clothing, dwellings and so on, *in the interests of the poor*. Without this, there can be no salvation of Russia from collapse and ruin; whereas an honest, courageous, universal move to hand over the administration to the proletarians and semi-proletarians will give rise to such an unheard-of revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses, will multiply so many times the popular forces in the struggle against suffering, that much that seemed impossible to our narrow old bureaucratic forces will become practicable for the forces of the masses, millions upon millions who *begin to work for themselves* and not for the capitalist, not for the master, not for the official, not under the compulsion of the stick.

With the question of the state apparatus is also connected the question of centralism, raised in a particularly energetic, but particularly unsuccessful, manner by Comrade Bazarov in No. 138 of the *Novaya Zhizn*, October 10, in an article, "The Bolsheviks and the Problem of Power."

Comrade Bazarov reasons thus: "The Soviets are not the kind of apparatus that is adapted to all spheres of state life," for a seven months' trial is supposed to have shown, and the evidence of "tens



and hundreds of documents possessed by the Economic Section of the Petrograd Executive Committee" to have confirmed, that although in many places the Soviets have had practically "full power," "they could not obtain any satisfactory results in their campaign against economic ruin." It is necessary, says Bazarov, to have an apparatus "divided according to branches of industry, strictly centralised within the limits of each branch and subject to one general state centre." "It is a question"—kindly note—"not of replacing the old apparatus, but of reforming it . . . however much the Bolsheviks may sneer at people with a plan."

All these observations of Comrade Bazarov are really amazingly helpless. They are an exact copy of the argument of the bourgeoisie, a reflection of its class point of view.

Now, really, to speak of the Soviets as having had anywhere in Russia, at any time, "full power," is simply absurd (if it is not a mere repetition of the selfish class lie of the capitalists). Full power means power over the whole land, over all the banks, all the factories; a man but slightly acquainted with historical experience, with scientific data concerning the connection between politics and economics, could not have "forgotten" this "slight" circumstance.

The lying method of the bourgeoisie consists in this, that, while *refusing* to give the Soviets power, *sabotaging* every one of their serious attempts, keeping the government in their own hands, holding power over the land and banks, and so on, they yet throw all the blame for the economic ruin on the Soviets! It is just this that forms the whole deplorable experience of the coalition.

The Soviets never had full power, and their measures so far could yield nothing but palliatives and further entanglements.

To prove to the Bolsheviks, who are centralists by conviction and by the programme and tactics of their whole party, the need for centralism means really to try to break into an open door. If the writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* indulge in such trivial activities, it is only because they have completely failed to understand the meaning of our mocking at their "general state" point of view. They fail to understand this because the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists only recognise the class struggle with their *lips*, not with their minds. Repeating the words about the class struggle which they have learnt by heart, they stumble every second over a theoretically amusing and practi-



cally reactionary "above-class point of view," calling this servility to the bourgeoisie a "general state" plan.

The state, my dear people, is a class concept. The state is an organ or apparatus of force to be used by one class against another. So long as it remains an apparatus for the bourgeoisie to use force against the proletariat, so long can the slogan of the proletariat be only—the *destruction* of this state. But when the state has become proletarian, when it has become an apparatus of force to be used by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, then we shall be fully and unreservedly for a strong state power and centralism.

Speaking more popularly, we are not ridiculing "plans"; we only laugh at the fact that Bazarov and Co. do not understand that, in rejecting "workers' control," in rejecting the "dictatorship of the proletariat," they *stand* for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. There is no middle course. That is but an empty dream of the petty bourgeois democrat.

Not a single centre, not a single Bolshevik ever argued against the *centralism* of the Soviets or their unification. None of us has ever objected to organising the factory and shop committees by branches of production and their centralisation. Bazarov is shooting *beside the mark*.

We laugh, have laughed, and shall continue to laugh, not at "centralism," nor at plans, but at *reformism*. For your reformist is doubly comical after the experience of the coalition. To say: "Not a change of apparatus but reform," is to be a reformist, is to become not a revolutionary but a reformist democrat. Reformism is nothing but concessions on the part of the ruling class; it does not signify the overthrow of this class; it signifies that concessions are made by it while it keeps power in its hands.

This is exactly what has been tried by the coalition for half a year.

This is what we are ridiculing. Bazarov, not having digested the concept of the class struggle, allows himself to be caught by the bourgeoisie, which sings in chorus: "Just—just so—we are not at all against reform, we are for the participation of the workers in the control of the state, we fully agree to this." The good Bazarov plays *objectively* the role of a person echoing the opinion of the capitalists.

This has always been and always will be the case with people who, in times of acute class struggle, endeavour to occupy a "middle"



position. And it is just because the writers of the *Novaya Zhizn* are incapable of understanding the class struggle that their policy is such a ridiculous, eternal vacillation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Better take to "plan-making," my dear citizens—that is not politics, that is not a matter of the class struggle. In this sphere you can indeed be useful to the people. You have many economists on your paper; unite with such engineers, etc., as are ready to work a little on the question of regulating production and distribution. Devote your big "apparatus" (your paper) to a business-like working out of exact data regarding the production and distribution of goods in Russia, regarding the banks, syndicates, etc., etc. Thereby you will benefit the people; here your position between two chairs can do no great harm. Here is work on "plans" which will arouse, not the ridicule, but the gratitude of the workers.

The proletariat, when victorious, will act thus. It will set the economists, engineers, agricultural experts and so on to work out a "plan" *under the control* of the workers' organisations, to test it, to seek means of saving labour by means of centralism, and of securing the most simple, cheap, convenient, general control. We shall pay the economists, statisticians, technicians, good money, but—but we shall not give them anything to eat unless they carry out this work honestly and entirely *in the interests of the workers*.

We are in favour of centralism and of a "plan," but it must be the centralism and the plan of the *proletarian* state—the proletarian regulation of production and distribution in the interest of the poor, the labouring, the exploited, *against* the exploiters. By the "general state" concept we agree to understand only that which breaks the resistance of the capitalists, which gives full power to the majority of the people, *i. e.*, to the proletarians and semi-proletarians—the workers and the poorest peasants.

The fifth argument is that the Bolsheviks will not retain power because "the circumstances are exceptionally complicated."

Oh, wiseacres! They are prepared perhaps to tolerate revolution, but without "exceptionally complicated circumstances."

Such revolutions never occur, and in the yearnings after such revolutions there is nothing but the reactionary lamentation of the bourgeois intellectual. Even if a revolution starts in circumstances which seem not so very complicated, the revolution itself, in its



development, always gives rise to exceptionally complicated circumstances. For a revolution, a real, deep, "people's revolution," to use Marx's expression, is the incredibly complicated and painful process of the dying of the old and the birth of the new social order, the adjustment of the lives of tens of millions of people. A revolution is the sharpest, most furious, desperate class struggle and civil war. Not a single great revolution in history has escaped civil war, and no one who does not live in a shell could imagine that civil war is conceivable without "exceptionally complicated circumstances."

If there were no exceptionally complicated circumstances, there would be no revolution. If you fear wolves, do not go into the forest.

In this fifth argument there is nothing to discuss, because there is neither economic nor political nor indeed any other idea in it. There is only the yearning of people who have been saddened and frightened by the revolution. To characterise these yearnings, I shall take the liberty of citing two little personal reminiscences.

A conversation with a rich engineer not long before the July days. The engineer had been at one time a revolutionist, a member of the Social-Democratic, indeed, of the Bolshevik Party. Now he is just in one tremor of fear and fury at the turbulent, untamable workers. "If at least they were workers, like the Germans!" said he (an educated man who had been abroad). "Of course, I understand in a general way, the inevitability of the social revolution, but to think of it now, when the standards of the workers have been so lowered by the war. . . . No, it is not revolution, it is an abyss."

He would be ready to accept the social revolution if history would lead up to it in the same peaceful, quiet, smooth, orderly way in which a German express train approaches a station. A sedate conductor opens the door of the car and calls out: "Social Revolution Station! *Alle aussteigen!*" \* In such a case, why not pass from the position of engineer under the Tit Tityches to that of engineer under the workers' organisations?

This man has seen strikes. He knows what a storm of passion is always aroused by an ordinary strike, even in the most peaceful times. He understands, of course, how many million times stronger must this storm be when the class struggle has aroused the *whole* labouring people of an enormous country, when the war and ex-

\* All out!—Ed.



plotation have reduced almost to despair millions of people who have been tortured for centuries by landowners, and robbed and downtrodden for decades by capitalists and tsarist officials. He understands all this "theoretically"; he recognises all this with his lips. He is simply scared by the "exceptionally complicated circumstances."

After the July days I was compelled, on account of the specially careful attention paid me by the Kerensky government, to go underground. Of course, it was the workers who gave people like us shelter. In an out-of-the-way workers' suburb of Petrograd, in a small working-class house, dinner is served. The hostess puts bread on the table. "Look," says the host, "what fine bread. 'They' dare not give us bad bread now. And we had almost forgotten that good bread could be had in Petrograd."

I was amazed at this class evaluation of the July days. My mind had revolved around the political significance of the event, it estimated its role in the general course of events, it analysed the situation that had given rise to the zigzag of history and the situation it was bound to create, and considered how we must alter our slogans and party apparatus so as to adapt them to the changed circumstances. As for bread, I, who had never been in need, never thought of it at all. Bread to me appeared of itself, as it were, as a sort of by-product of a writer's work. Fundamentally, one's ideas reach the class struggle for bread, through political analysis, by an extraordinarily complicated and involved path.

But the representative of the oppressed class, although one of the well-paid and well-educated workers, takes the bull straight by the horns, with that wonderful simplicity and directness, with that firm determination, with that astonishing clear insight, which is as far from us, the intellectuals, as the stars in the sky. The whole world is divided into two camps: "we," the labouring, and "they," the exploiters. Not a shade of confusion as to what had happened—just one of the battles in the long struggle of labour against capital. When wood is cut, chips must fly.

"What a painful thing are these 'exceptionally complicated circumstances' of the revolution!" Thus thinks and feels the bourgeois intellectual.

"We have screwed 'them' down; 'they' do not dare make trouble for us as before. Let's press harder still, and we'll overthrow them altogether!" Thus thinks and feels the worker.



The sixth and last argument is that the proletariat "will not be able to resist all the pressure of the hostile forces which will sweep away not only the dictatorship of the proletariat but the whole revolution as well."

Do not try to scare us, gentlemen, we won't be scared. We have seen these hostile forces and their pressure in Kornilovism (from which Kerenskyism differs in no way). How Kornilov's forces were routed by the proletariat and the poorest peasantry; how pitiful and helpless was the position of the supporters of the bourgeoisie and the small number of representatives of the particularly well-to-do small local landowners who were particularly hostile to the revolution—these things were seen by all; they are remembered by the people. The *Dyelo Naroda* of October 13, in trying to persuade the workers to "tolerate" Kerenskyism (i.e., Kornilovism) and Tsere-teli's fake Bulygin Duma until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly (convoked under the protection of "military measures" against the rising peasants!), repeats with gusto this sixth argument of the *Novaya Zhizn*, and screams till it becomes hoarse: "The Kerensky government will under no circumstances submit" (to the Soviet power, to the power of the workers and peasants, which, not to lag behind the Black Hundreds, the anti-Semites, Monarchists and Cadets, the *Dyelo Naroda* calls the power of "Trotsky and Lenin"—this is how low the Socialist-Revolutionaries have sunk!).

But the class-conscious workers are not to be frightened either by the *Dyelo Naroda* or by the *Novaya Zhizn*. "The Kerensky government," you say, "will under no circumstances submit"—that is, it will repeat the Kornilov affair, to speak more simply, more directly, more clearly. And the gentlemen of the *Dyelo Naroda* dare to say that that will be "civil war," that this is a "terrible prospect"!

No, gentlemen, you will not deceive the workers. This will not be civil war, but a most hopeless conspiracy of a handful of Kornilovists; or perhaps they wish, by not "submitting" to the people, to provoke at all costs a repetition on a large scale of what happened at Vyborg in connection with the Kornilovists; if the S.-R.'s desire this, if the member of the S.-R. Party, Kerensky, desires this, he can drive the people to desperation. But you will not frighten the workers and soldiers with this, gentlemen.

What unlimited impudence! They fake a new Bulygin Duma by means of trickery, they recruit, by fraud, a crowd of reactionary leaders of co-operatives, of village kulaks to assist them; to these



they add capitalists and landowners (called propertied elements), and with this band of Kornilovists they want to *obstruct the will of the people*, the will of the workers and peasants.

They have brought affairs in a peasant land to such a state that everywhere the tide of peasant revolts is rising! Just think of it! In a democratic republic, where 80 per cent of the people are peasants, they were actually driven to a peasant uprising. . . . The same *Dyelo Naroda*, Chernov's organ, the organ of the "Socialist-Revolutionary" Party, which on October 13 had the impudence to advise the workers and peasants to "be patient," had been forced to admit, in a leading article on October 12, that "almost nothing has so far been done to destroy the conditions of *slavery* which *still prevail* in the villages of Central Russia."

This same *Dyelo Naroda*, in the same article, October 12, says that "the grip of Stolypin is still felt strongly in the methods of the 'revolutionary Ministers.'" That is, in other words, they call Kerensky, Nikitin, Kishkin and Co., *Stolypinists*.

The "Stolypinists," Kerensky and Co., have brought the peasants to uprising, and now they introduce "military measures" against the peasants, and console the people with promises to convoke the Constituent Assembly (although Kerensky and Tsereteli have already *deceived* the people once, for, after triumphantly declaring, on July 21, that the Constituent Assembly would be convoked on September 30, they *broke their word* and put off the Constituent Assembly, even against the advice of the *Menshevik Dan*, not to the end of October as the Menshevik Central Executive Committee of that time desired, but to the end of November). The "Stolypinists," Kerensky and Co., console the people with the idea of the early convocation of the Constituent Assembly, as though the people could trust those who have already played them false in like circumstances, as though the people could believe in the *honest* convocation of the Constituent Assembly by a government which is introducing *military measures* in out-of-the-way villages, and thus quite evidently *concealing* arbitrary arrests of class-conscious peasants and the *falsification* of the elections.

They drive the peasants to uprising, and then have the impudence to tell them that it is necessary to "be patient," it is necessary to wait a while, to trust that government which is putting down the rebelling peasants with "military measures."

They bring matters to such a pass as to drive to perdition hun-



dreds of thousands of Russian soldiers in the offensive after July 2, to prolong the war, to provoke a mutiny of German sailors, who threw their superiors overboard, they bring about such a state of affairs, all the time uttering fine phrases about peace, *without offering* a just peace to *all* the belligerent nations; and yet they have the effrontery to tell the workers and peasants, to tell the dying soldiers, "You must be patient a bit, trust the government of the 'Stolypinist,' Kerensky, have faith another month in the Kornilovist generals" (who perhaps in another month will lead to the slaughter a few more tens of thousands of soldiers) . . . "forbear a little longer."

Is this not impudence?

No, Messrs. S.-R.'s, party colleagues of Kerensky—you will not deceive the soldiers!

Not a single day, not a single *extra* hour, will the workers and soldiers tolerate the Kerensky government, for they know that the Soviet government will make an *immediate* offer of a just peace to all the belligerents, and will therefore *in all probability* reach an immediate armistice and an early peace.

Not a single day, not a single *extra* hour will the soldiers of our peasant army tolerate that, in spite of the opposition of the Soviets, the Kerensky government, with its *military measures* for putting down the peasant rising, should stand.

No, Messrs. S.-R.'s, party colleagues of Kerensky—you will no longer deceive the workers and peasants.

As to the pressure of the hostile forces, which, according to the assurances of the mortally terrified *Novaya Zhizn*, will sweep away the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is contained here another monstrous logical and political error which only those can pass over who have allowed themselves to be terrorised to the point of losing their senses.

"The pressure of hostile forces," you say, "will sweep away the dictatorship of the proletariat." Very well. But you are all economists and educated people, my dear fellow-citizens. You all know that to compare democracy with the bourgeoisie is senseless and clownish, that it is just the same as comparing pounds with yards. For there may exist a democratic bourgeoisie and there may exist non-democratic strata of the petty bourgeoisie (capable of Vendéism).\*

\* Vendée—the region where the peasants supported the nobles during the French Revolution in 1793 under the influence of the church.—*Ed.*



"Hostile forces"—this is a phrase. The class meaning of it, however, is the *bourgeoisie* (behind which stand also the landowners).

The bourgeoisie and the landowners; the proletariat; the petty bourgeoisie, the petty proprietors among whom are primarily, the peasants—these are the three fundamental "forces" into which Russia is divided, like *every* capitalist country. Here are the three fundamental "forces" which are made evident in every capitalist country (and in Russia) not only by a scientific economic analysis but by the *political experience* of all the more recent history of *all* countries, by the experience of *all* European revolutions of the eighteenth century, and by the experience of the *two* Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

And so you threaten the proletariat that the pressure of the bourgeoisie will sweep away their power? This and this only is what your threat comes down to; it has no other meaning.

Very well. If, for instance, the bourgeoisie can sweep away the power of the workers and poorest peasantry, then nothing else remains than coalition, *i.e.*, a union or understanding of the petty bourgeoisie with the bourgeoisie. Nothing else\* can even be imagined!!

But the coalition has been tried for half a year, and has led to collapse, and you yourselves, dear citizens of *Novaya Zhizn*, but incapable of thinking, you yourselves have *forsworn* it.

What is the result?

You have become so muddled, citizens of *Novaya Zhizn*, you have allowed yourselves to be so scared that even in the most simple discussion, *in counting not even up to five but only up to three*, you cannot make things come out right.

Either all power to the bourgeoisie—this you have not defended for a long time, indeed not even the bourgeoisie itself dares to hint at it, knowing that already on May 3-4 the people overthrew such power by one movement of their shoulder, and would overthrow it now thrice as determinedly and mercilessly. Or all power to the petty bourgeoisie—that is, to its coalition, (union, agreement) with the bourgeoisie, for the petty bourgeoisie cannot and does not wish to take power independently, as has been proved by the experience of all revolutions; and also proved by economic science, which explains that in a capitalist country one can stand for capitalism or for labour but one cannot stand in the middle. Thus coalition in Russia has tried dozens of methods for half a year, and has failed.



Or, finally, all power to the proletariat and poorest peasantry, against the bourgeoisie in order to break its resistance. This has not yet been tried, and this you, gentlemen of the *Novaya Zhizn*, *dissuade* the people from doing, you try to scare them with the bourgeoisie as you yourselves are scared.

No fourth course can be thought of at all.

Consequently, if the *Novaya Zhizn* is afraid of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and rejects it because of the possible defeat of a proletarian power by the bourgeoisie, this amounts to a stealthy return to the position of *coalition* with the capitalists!!! It is clear as daylight that he who is afraid of resistance, who does not believe in the possibility of breaking this resistance, he who admonishes the people: "Take heed of the resistance of the capitalists, you will be unable to overcome it," *thereby* invokes again the acceptance of an understanding with the capitalists.

Helpless and pitiful is the confusion of the *Novaya Zhizn*, as is now the confusion of all the petty-bourgeois democrats who see the collapse of the coalition, who dare not defend it openly, who, being themselves protected by the bourgeoisie, are afraid of an all-powerful proletariat and poorest peasantry.

To be afraid of the resistance of the capitalists while calling oneself a revolutionist and desiring to be numbered among the Socialists—what a disgrace! What an ideological collapse of international Socialism, corrupted by opportunism, was necessary so that such voices could be raised!

We have already seen, the whole nation has already seen, the strength of capitalist resistance; for the capitalists, being more class-conscious than the other classes, at once recognised the significance of the Soviets, and immediately spent *all their strength*, did all and everything, adopted every device, went to the length of most atrocious measures of lies and abuse, of military plots—all *in order to destroy the Soviets*, to reduce their power to *naught*, to prostitute them (with the help of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks), to transform them into talk shops, and to tire out the peasants and workers by months and months of the emptiest chatter and playing at revolution.

But the strength of the resistance of the proletariat and poorest peasantry *we have still not seen*, for this strength will rise to its full height only when power is in the hands of the proletariat, when tens of millions of people crushed by need and capitalist slavery see by



actual experience, when they *feel*, that power in the state has really been attained by the oppressed classes, that the state power is really helping the poor to struggle against the landowners and capitalists, is *breaking* their resistance. Only then shall we be able to see what untapped forces of resistance to capitalism are hidden within the people; only then will be made evident what Engels calls "hidden Socialism," only then will it appear that for every ten thousand open or concealed enemies who resist, actively or passively, the authority of the working class, *a million* new fighters arise, until then politically dormant, dragging out an existence in tortures of poverty and despair, having lost faith in themselves as human beings, having forgotten that they too have a right to live, that they too could be served by the modern centralised state, that their battalions of proletarian militia can also be called with full confidence to participate in the immediate, direct, daily work of administration of the state.

The capitalists and landowners, with the sympathetic help of the Plekhanovs, Breshkovskayas, Tseretelis, Chernovs and Co., have done *everything* to *soil* the democratic republic, to pollute it by their servility to wealth, to such an extent that the people have been seized by apathy and indifference. It is *all the same to them*, for a hungry man cannot distinguish between a republic and a monarchy: a frozen, shoeless, weary soldier, perishing for the interests of others, is in no condition of getting to love a republic.

However, when the last common workman, every unemployed worker, every cook, every ruined peasant sees, not from the paper, but with his own eyes, that the proletarian power is not cringing before the rich, but is helping the poor, that this power is not afraid of revolutionary measures, that it takes surplus products from the parasites and gives them to the hungry, that it forcibly moves the homeless into the dwellings of the rich, that it forces the rich to pay for milk, but does not give them a drop of it until the children of *all* the poor families have received adequate supplies, that the land is passing into the hands of the toilers, that the factories and banks are coming under the control of the workers, that serious and immediate punishment is meted out to millionaires who conceal their riches—when the poor see and feel this, then no forces of the capitalists and kulaks, no forces of international finance capital manipulating hundreds of billions will be able to conquer the people's revolution; on the contrary, *it* will conquer the whole world, for in all countries the Socialist revolution is maturing.



Our revolution is unconquerable if it is not afraid of itself, if it entrusts full power to the proletariat. For back of us stand the immeasurably larger, more developed, more organised world forces of the proletariat, temporarily crushed by the war, but not destroyed; on the contrary, only multiplied by it.

To fear that the power of the Bolsheviks—that is, the power of the proletariat, which is assured of the unlimited support of the poorest peasantry—will be “swept away” by the capitalist gentlemen! What shortsightedness! What disgraceful distrust of the people! What hypocrisy! The people who manifest this fear belong to that “upper” (by capitalist standards, but in reality *rotten*) “society,” which pronounces the word “justice” without itself believing in it, as a habit, as a phrase, without putting any content into it.

Here is an example:

Mr. Peshekhonov is a well-known semi-Cadet; a more moderate Labourite, at one in ideas with the Breshkovskayas and Plekhanovs, it would be difficult to find; there was no Minister more servile to the bourgeoisie; the world has never seen a warmer partisan of the coalition, of an understanding with the capitalists.

And here is the admission this gentleman was compelled to make in his speech at the “Democratic” (read: Bulygin) Conference, according to the report of the defensist *Izvestiya*:

There are two programmes. One is the programme of group claims, class and national claims. This programme is most openly defended by the Bolsheviks. But the other sections of the democracy cannot readily reject this programme. For this is a recognition of the claims of the labouring masses, of the ill-treated and oppressed nationalities. It is not so easy, therefore, for the democracy to break with the Bolsheviks, to deny these class demands, above all because these demands are, in their essence, just. But this programme for which we struggled before the revolution, for the sake of which we made the revolution, and which under other circumstances we all would have supported very strongly, presents, under the present circumstances, a great danger. The danger is now so much the greater that these demands have to be asserted at a moment when their satisfaction by the state is impossible. We must first of all save the whole—the state—we must first of all save it from ruin, and there is only one way of doing this—not to satisfy demands, however just and strong they might appear, but on the contrary, to call for limitations and sacrifices, which must be borne on all sides (*Izvestiya* of the Central Executive Committee, September 30).

Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that, while the capitalists are in power, he is defending *not* the whole, but the avaricious interests of Russian and “Allied” imperialist capital. Mr. Peshekhonov



does not understand that the war will cease to be an imperialist, predatory war of conquest only after a break with the capitalists, with *their* secret treaties, with *their* annexations (seizure of others' lands), with *their* banking, financial swindles. Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that only *after* this would the war become— if the enemy were to reject a formal offer of a just peace—a defensive just war. Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that the defensive power of the country, after ridding itself of the yoke of capitalism, and after giving the land to the peasants and placing the banks and factories under workers' control, would be many times stronger than the defensive power of a capitalist country. ¶

And, most important of all, Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that when he is forced to admit the justice of Bolshevism, to admit that its demands are the demands of the "labouring masses," *i.e.*, of the majority of the nation, he *abandons* thereby his whole position, the whole position of the whole petty-bourgeois democracy.

Herein lies our strength. Our government will be invincible because even our antagonists are forced to admit that the Bolshevik programme is the programme of the "labouring masses" and "oppressed nationalities."

Mr. Peshekhonov, remember, is the political friend of the Cadets, of the people of the *Yedinstvo* and the *Dyelo Naroda*, of the Breshkovskayas and the Plekhanovs. He is the representative of the kulaks and of those gentlemen whose wives and sisters would come tomorrow to gouge out with their umbrellas the eyes of the dying Bolsheviks, if they were beaten by Kornilov's or (what comes to exactly the same thing) Kerensky's soldiers.

And such a gentleman is *compelled* to recognise the justice of the Bolshevik demands.

For him "justice" is but a phrase. But for the masses of the semi-proletarians, for the majority of the petty bourgeoisie of town and country, ruined, exhausted, tortured by the war, it is not a phrase, but the most direct, the most burning, the most momentous question, that of starvation or a crust of bread. This is why no policy can be based on coalition, on an "understanding" between the interests of the hungry and ruined and the interests of the exploiters. This is why the Bolshevik government is assured of the support of the overwhelming majority of these masses.

Justice is an empty word, say the intellectuals and those rascals who are inclined to declare themselves Marxists on the very lofty



ground that they have once "contemplated the hind end" of economic materialism.

Ideas become power when they seize hold of the masses. Just now the Bolsheviks, *i.e.*, the representatives of revolutionary proletarian internationalism, have by their policy given substance to this idea which is stirring the vast labouring masses of the whole world.

Justice of itself, the mere feelings of the indignant exploited masses, would never have led them on the right road to Socialism. But when, thanks to capitalism, there grew up the apparatus of big banks, syndicates, railways, and so on; when the rich experience of the most advanced countries has amassed a hoard of marvellous technical knowledge, the application of which capitalism is now *hindering*; when the class-conscious workers have formed a party of a quarter of a million members for the purpose of taking this apparatus into their hands in a planned fashion and setting it going with the support of all the labouring and exploited masses—when these conditions are extant, then there is no force on earth which can prevent the Bolsheviks, *if only they do not allow themselves to be cowed* and are able to seize power, from retaining it until the final victory of the world Socialist revolution.

#### POSTSCRIPT

The foregoing lines had already been written when the leading editorial of the *Novaya Zhizn* of October 14 yielded a new pearl of stupidity, the more dangerous since it is concealed under the flag of sympathy for the Bolsheviks, or under the shelter of the wisest philistine discussion about "not letting ourselves be provoked" (not letting ourselves be caught in a snare of screams about provocation serving the purpose of frightening off the Bolsheviks from seizing power). Here is this pearl:

The lessons of movements such as those on July 16 and 18, on the one hand, and the Kornilov days on the other, have shown quite clearly that democracy which has at its disposal the organs that are most influential among the population, is invincible when it is on the defensive in a civil war, but that it suffers defeat, losing all the intermediate vacillating elements, when it takes the initiative of attack into its own hands.

If the Bolsheviks were to show in any form whatever any leanings towards the kind of philistine stupidity expressed in this argument they would ruin both their party and the revolution.



For the author of this argument, having taken it upon himself to talk of civil war (a theme very suitable indeed for that perfectly charming lady, the *Novaya Zhizn*), has perverted the *lessons of history* with an almost incredibly comic result.

Here is how Karl Marx, the representative and founder of proletarian revolutionary tactics, analysed *these* lessons, the lessons of history in connection with *this* question:

Insurrection is an art quite as much as war or any other, and subject to certain rules of proceeding, which, when neglected, will produce the ruin of the party neglecting them. Those rules, logical deductions from the nature of the parties and the circumstances one has to deal with in such a case, are so plain and simple that the short experience of 1848 had made the Germans pretty well acquainted with them. Firstly, never play with insurrection unless you are fully prepared to face the consequences of your play. Insurrection is a calculus with very indefinite magnitudes, the value of which may change every day; the forces opposed to you have all the advantage of organisation, discipline, and habitual authority. [Marx has in mind the most difficult case of insurrection against a "firmly established" old power, against an army that has not decayed under the influence of the revolution and the vacillating policy of the government.] Unless you bring strong odds against them you are defeated and ruined. Secondly, the insurrectionary career once entered upon, act with the greatest determination, and on the offensive. The defensive is the death of every armed rising; it is lost before it measures itself with its enemies. Surprise your antagonists while their forces are scattering, prepare new successes, however small, but daily; keep up the moral ascendancy which the first successful rising has given to you; rally those vacillating elements to your side which always follow the strongest impulse, and which always look out for the safer side; force your enemies to a retreat before they can collect their strength against you; in the words of Danton, the greatest master of revolutionary policy yet known, *de l'audace, de l'audace, encore de l'audace!* [Rendered freely: "Audacity, more audacity and still more audacity."—Ed.] \*

We have changed all this, the "also-Marxists" of the *Novaya Zhizn* might say of themselves: instead of triple audacity we have two qualities—yes, we have two—"moderation and accuracy." For "us" the experience of world history, the experience of the great French Revolution, is of no consequence. For "us" the experience of the two movements of 1917, distorted by Molchalin \*\* spectacles, is sufficient.

Let us have a look at this experience without these lovely spectacles.

\* The whole quotation is taken from Karl Marx, *Revolution and Counter-revolution, or Germany in 1848*. London, 1920, pp. 119-120. This is a collection of articles written by Engels which were ascribed wrongly to Marx, although these articles were written at the request of Marx for the *New York Tribune* and were edited by him.—Ed.

\*\* Molchalin is a submissive state official in a comedy by Griboyedov.—Ed.



July 16-18 you compare with "civil war"; for you implicitly believe Alexinsky, Pereverzev and Co. It is characteristic of the gentlemen of the *Novaya Zhizn* that they believe *such* people (while doing nothing themselves independently to *collect* information regarding July 16-18, although they have the huge apparatus of a big daily paper).

But let us concede for a moment that July 16-18 was not merely the beginning of civil war, kept by the Bolsheviks within the limits of incipency, but a real civil war—let us grant this.

What then does this lesson indicate?

Firstly, that the Bolsheviks did *not* take the offensive, for it is indisputable that had they taken the offensive on the night of July 16-17, or even during July 17, they would have achieved a good deal. Their defensive tactics were their weakness, if we are to talk of civil war (as does the *Novaya Zhizn*) and not of the transformation of a spontaneous outburst into a demonstration of the type of May 3-4 (as the *facts* tell us).

And thus the "lesson" speaks *against* the wiseacres of the *Novaya Zhizn*.

Secondly, if the Bolsheviks did not even aim at an insurrection on July 16-17, if not a single organisation of the Bolsheviks even raised this question, the reason for this is *outside* our dispute with the *Novaya Zhizn*. For we are discussing the lessons of a "civil war," *i.e.*, of an uprising, and not of the circumstances when a revolutionary party, knowing that it has not a majority on its side, does not even think of an uprising.

As it is well known that the Bolsheviks received a majority in the Soviets both in the capitals and in the country (more than 49 per cent of the votes in Moscow) *much later* than July, 1917, therefore the "lessons" to be drawn are, once again, not at all those which the perfectly charming *Novaya Zhizn* lady would like to draw.

No, no; you had better not take to politics, citizens of the *Novaya Zhizn*!

If a revolutionary party has no majority in the vanguard of the revolutionary classes and throughout the country, then there can be no question of an uprising. Besides this, an insurrection requires: (1) the maturing of the revolution on a general national scale; (2) the complete moral and political collapse of the old, for instance the "coalition," government; (3) great vacillation among



all the intermediate elements, *i.e.*, among those who are *not* fully in favour of the government, although they fully supported it yesterday.

Why has the *Novaya Zhizn*, in proceeding to discuss the "lessons" of July 16-18, not even noticed this very important lesson? Because they are not politicians discussing political questions, but only members of a circle of intellectuals frightened out of their wits by the bourgeoisie.

Further, and thirdly, the facts show that it is just *after* July 16-17, precisely as a result of the *revelation* of the nature of the Messrs. Tseretelis' *July* policy, precisely because the *masses* have recognised the Bolsheviks as *their own* front-rank fighters and the "Social-blocists" as traitors, that the *collapse* of the Mensheviks and S.-R.'s is beginning. This collapse was already fully proved *even before* the Kornilov episode, by the elections of September 2, in Petrograd, which gave a victory to the Bolsheviks and played havoc with the "Social-blocists." (The *Dyelo Naroda*, not long ago, tried to disprove this, concealing the totals regarding *all* parties, but this is a self-deception and a deception of the reader. According to the *Dyen* of September 6, referring only to the towns, the percentage of votes for the Cadets rose from 22 to 23, while their absolute number of votes decreased 40 per cent; the percentage of votes for the Bolsheviks rose from 20 to 33, while their absolute number of votes decreased by only 10 per cent; the percentage of votes for all the "intermediates" decreased from 58 to 44, while their absolute number of votes decreased by 60 per cent!!).

The collapse of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks, after the July days and up to the Kornilov days, is also shown by the growth of the "Left" Wing in each party, reaching nearly 40 per cent—"revenge" for the persecutions of the Bolsheviks by the Kerenskys.

The proletarian party, in spite of the "loss" of a few hundreds of its members, has gained enormously as a result of July 16-17, for precisely in those difficult days the *masses* came to comprehend and to recognise its devotion and the *treachery* of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks. The "lesson," it appears, is altogether of a different nature from that taught by the *Novaya Zhizn*. Do not leave the seething masses for the "Molchalin democracy," and, if you do revolt, then take the offensive while the forces of the enemy are still scattered—take the enemy unawares.



Is that not so, gentlemen—you “also-Marxists” of the *Novaya Zhizn*?

Or does “Marxism” consist in *not* taking as the foundation for one’s tactics an exact account of the *objective* situation and simply throwing in one heap, without reason or criticism, “civil war,” “Congress of Soviets and the summoning of the Constituent Assembly”?

But surely, gentlemen, this is simply ridiculous, it is nothing but a mockery of Marxism and of all logic in general. If in the *objective* state of affairs there is *no* foundation for the sharpening of the class struggle to the point of “civil war,” *then* why have you started talking about “civil war” in connection with the subject of the “Congress of Soviets and the Constituent Assembly”? (This is the exact title of the leading article in the *Novaya Zhizn*.) In that case you should have told the reader clearly, and shown to him, that in the present objective state of affairs there is *no* foundation for civil war, and that, therefore, one can and must place as the cornerstone of one’s tactics peaceful, constitutionally legal, judicially and parliamentarily “simple” things, such as the Congress of Soviets and the Constituent Assembly. Then one *can* hold the view that such a congress and such an assembly are really capable of making *decisions*.

If, however, there is the germ of the inevitability, or at least probability, of civil war in the objective circumstances of the moment, if you have not talked of it merely “at random,” but clearly seeing, feeling, sensing that the circumstances are opportune for civil war, then how can you place as your cornerstone the Congress of Soviets or the Constituent Assembly? This is surely but mocking the hungry, tortured masses! What! Do you think the starving people will agree to “wait” two months? Or that the economic ruin, of the growth of which you yourselves write daily, will consent to “wait” till the Congress of Soviets or the Constituent Assembly? Or that the German offensive, in the absence of serious steps towards peace (that is, in the absence of a formal offer of a just peace to all the belligerents) on our side, will agree to “wait” until the meeting of the Congress of Soviets and the Constituent Assembly? Or have you facts that allow you to conclude that the history of the Russian Revolution, which has been proceeding in an extraordinarily stormy way, and with extremely rapid *tempo* from March 13 to October 13, will assume between October 14 and December 12 an



unusually calm, peaceful, legally balanced pace, excluding explosions, leaps, military defeats, or economic crises? Or will the army at the front, of which the *non*-Bolshevik officer Dubasov declared officially in the name of the front that "it will not fight," will this army begin again to starve and freeze calmly until the date "fixed"? Or will the peasant risings cease to be an element of civil war, merely because you designate them as "anarchy" and "pogrom," or because Kerensky sends "military" forces *against the peasants*? Or is quiet, regular, really honest work by the government for the summoning of the Constituent Assembly possible, *conceivable* in a *peasant* country when at the same time the government is *suppressing* a peasant uprising?

Do not laugh at the "confusion in the Smolny Institute," gentlemen! Your own confusion is no less. You reply to the stern question of civil war by means of confused phrases and pitiful constitutional illusions. This is why I say that if the Bolsheviks were to yield to such moods they would ruin both their party and their revolution.

October 14, 1917.



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